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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND NEA/IPA; PRM FOR FRONT OFFICE AND PRM/ANE; NSC FOR SHAPIRO/KUMAR; JCS FOR LT GEN SELVA

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TAGS: PREF KPAL IS

SUBJECT: RISING TENSIONS IN SHU'FAT REFUGEE CAMP AS ISRAELI AUTHORITIES ENTER FOR THIRD CONSECUTIVE DAY

Classified By: Consul General Daniel Rubinstein for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

¶1. (SBU) Summary. According to UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) staff, Israeli police and Jerusalem municipality officials conducted intermittent operations in the Shu'fat refugee camp in East Jerusalem between February 7 and February 10. As of February 10, Israeli authorities had arrested 77 Palestinians. Sporadic skirmishes with refugee youth have been taking place, with Palestinian youth throwing rocks and glass bottles and Israeli police responding with stun grenades, tear gas, and rubber bullets. UNRWA reports approximately 10 Palestinian injuries. The Israeli operation appears related to municipal tax collection as well as the presence of individuals who hold West Bank ID card holders in this East Jerusalem refugee camp. End Summary.

¶2. (C) According to UNRWA Operation Support Office (OSO) Team Leader Mahmuda Ali, Israeli Border Police (aka Mishmar ha-Gvul or Magav) and Israeli National Police personnel entered the Shu'fat refugee camp late on February 7 and again early on February 8, arresting approximately 60 Palestinians.

Many detainees were between 16 and 19 years of age, and may have been associated with political or criminal activity, Ali said. Others were arrested for "illegal presence," as Palestinians with West Bank ID cards are not allowed inside the Jerusalem municipality (as defined by Israel) without a permit. Note: Shu'fat camp lies within the Jerusalem municipal boundaries, but is on the West Bank side of the separation barrier. The Shu'fat checkpoint is the only access point between the camp and Jerusalem. End Note. Ali reported that life in the camp remained fairly normal during the initial 36 hours of the operation. With the arrival of international journalists around 14:00 local time on February 8, the Israeli authorities departed the camp, according to Post contacts.

¶3. (C) On February 9 and 10, Jerusalem municipal officials with police escorts attempted to collect taxes from the camp residents, according to Ali. There were fewer arrests compared to February 7-8. Camp residents are expected to pay Jerusalem municipal taxes and fees, Ali noted, but do not benefit from municipal services, such as road maintenance and garbage collection. For most of the day, Israeli police in some two dozen jeeps were deployed just outside the Shu'fat checkpoint, according to UNRWA staff. When they entered the camp, they frequently encountered groups of refugee youth throwing rocks and glass bottles. Police responded with tear gas, rubber bullets, and stun grenades.

¶4. (SBU) These skirmishes resulted in approximately 10 Palestinian injuries. As of 14:00 local time on February 10, UNRWA reported that the situation in the Shu'fat refugee camp was quiet but tense. UNRWA school principals were trying to maintain calm in the camp schools, and planned to release the

students in small groups rather than one large crowd.

¶ 15. (C) Ali described the Israeli operation as a "sweep," with some arrests made seemingly at random on the streets and other arrests targeting individuals in their homes. According to UNRWA, the Israeli police said only that they were conducting a law enforcement operation. As of February 10, UNRWA reported that Israeli authorities had arrested 77 Palestinians.

RUBINSTEIN